

Incarceration Trends in ALABAMA

Incarceration in Local Jails and State Prisons



REGIONAL RANK

5 of 7 in total incarceration

Total people...

...locked up in Alabama



13,331 people (1983) **37,151** people (2015)

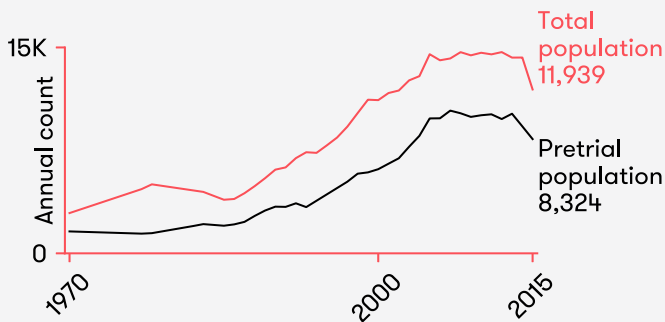
1983 2015

Since 1970, the rate of incarceration in America has expanded more than fourfold, and the United States leads the world in locking people up. Many places in America have begun to reduce their use of prisons and jails, but progress has been uneven. Although the number of people sent to state prisons and county jails from urban areas has decreased, that number has continued to rise in many rural places. Racial disparities in incarceration remain strikingly wide. Women constitute a rising number of those behind bars.

This fact sheet provides at-a-glance information about how many people are locked up in both state prisons and county jails and shows where the state stands on a variety of metrics, so that policymakers and the public can better determine where to target reforms.

STATE TOTALS

JAILS

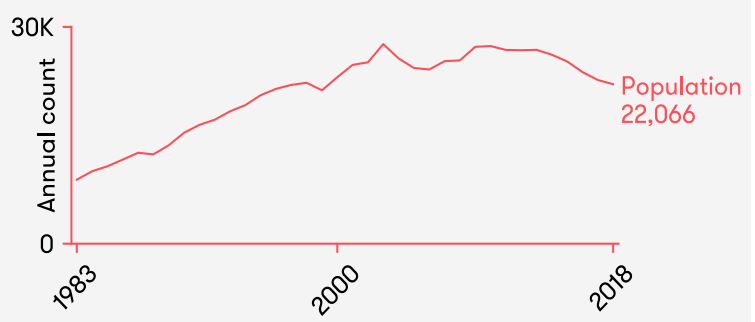


% change in jail population

SINCE 1970	SINCE 2000
307% ↑	7% ↑

Since 1970, the total jail population has increased 307%. In 2015, pretrial detainees constituted 70% of the total jail population in Alabama.

PRISONS



% change in prison population

SINCE 1983	SINCE 2000
149% ↑	-4% ↓

Since 1983, the prison custody population has increased 149%. In 2018, there were 22,066 people in the Alabama prison system.

RACE

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JAILS 2015

28% of state pop. | 43% of jail pop.



PRISONS 2017

28% of state pop. | 54% of prison pop.



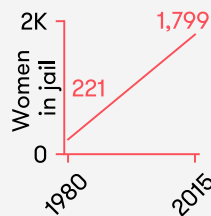
In Alabama, Black people constituted 28% of state residents, but 43% of people in jail and 54% of people in prison.

GENDER

more on pg 2 →

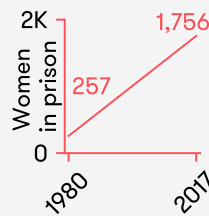
JAILS

711% ↑



PRISONS

583% ↑



Since 1980, the number of women in jail has increased 711%, and the number of women in prison has increased 583%.

GEOGRAPHY

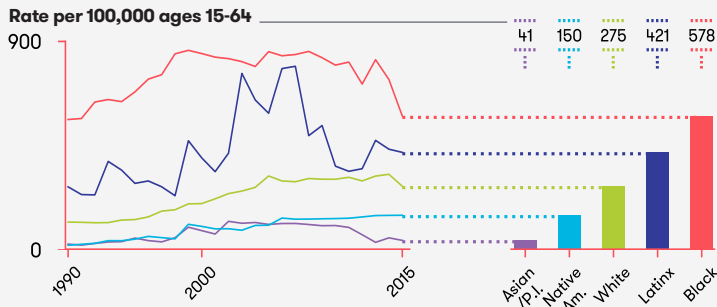
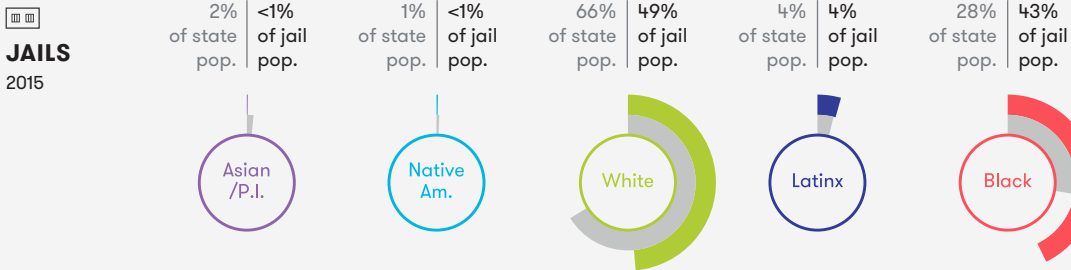
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Top admission rates, 2015 (rate per 100K)

COUNTY	JAILS	COUNTY	PRISONS
Macon	22,524	Randolph	833
Cherokee	18,725	Covington	796
Marion	16,144	Cherokee	625
Clay	13,862	Butler	620
Chambers	13,283	Escambia	588

Incarceration is not only an urban phenomenon. In fact, on a per capita basis, the most rural places in the state often lock up the most people in jail and send the most people to prison.

RACE AND ETHNICITY



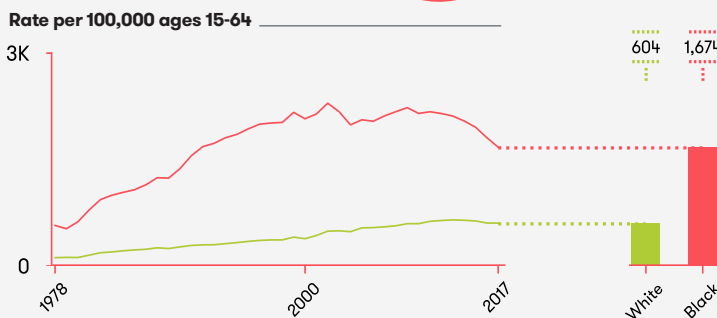
Since 1990, the Black incarceration rate has increased 3 percent. In 2015, Black people were incarcerated at 2.1 times the rate of white people.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The overrepresentation of Black Americans in the justice system is well documented. Black men constitute about 13 percent of the male population, but about 35 percent of those incarcerated. One in five Black people born in their lifetime, compared to one in 10 Latinx people and one in 29 white people.

Discriminatory criminal justice policies and practices at all stages of the justice process have unjustifiably disadvantaged Black people, including through disparity in the enforcement of seemingly race-neutral laws. Studies have found that Black people are more likely to be stopped by the police, detained pretrial, charged with more serious crimes, and sentenced more harshly than white people—even when controlling for things like offense severity.

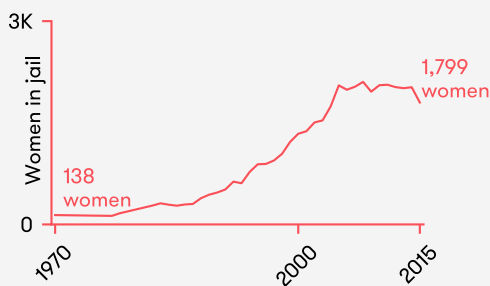
Nationally, Latinx people are also overrepresented in prisons and jails, yet common data misclassification leads to distorted, lower estimates of Latinx incarceration rates and distorted, higher estimates of white incarceration rates. Smaller and inconsistent data reporting make it difficult to measure the effects of racism for incarcerated people of other racial groups.



Since 1978, the Black incarceration rate has increased 193 percent. In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 2.8 times the rate of white people. Prison incarceration rates of other racial groups are not available because Alabama does not report comprehensive prison data disaggregated by race.

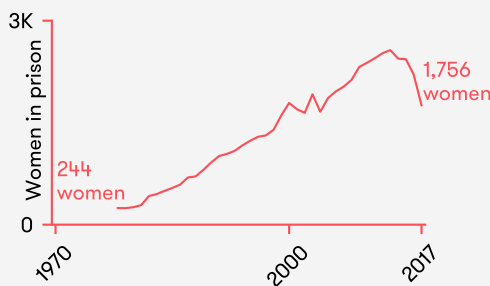
GENDER

JAILS



The number of women in Alabama's jails has increased more than 13-fold, from 138 in 1970 to 1,799 in 2015.

PRISONS



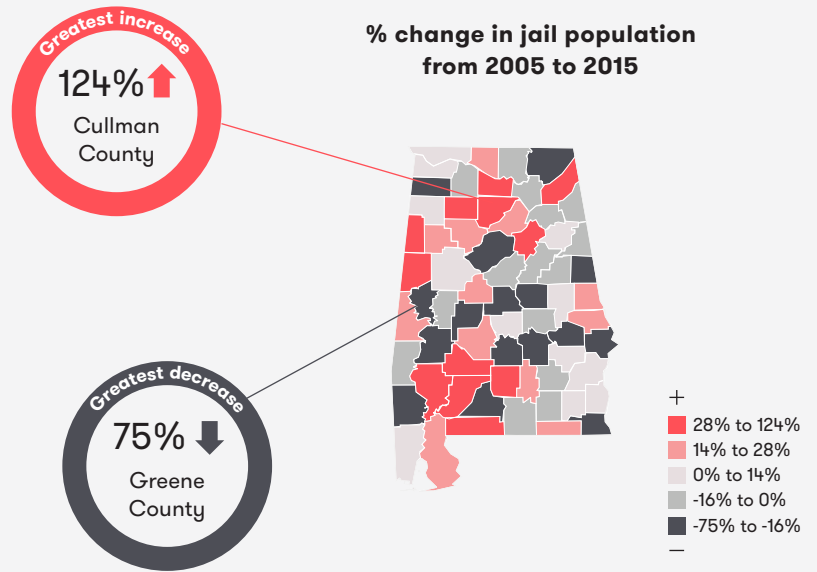
The number of women in Alabama's prisons has increased more than sevenfold, from 244 in 1978 to 1,756 in 2017.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Although men's jail admissions have declined by 26 percent since 2008, women's admissions have increased both as a total number and as a proportion of all jail admissions. Women now make up almost one out of every four jail admissions, up from fewer than one in 10 in 1983. Since 1970, the number of women in U.S. jails has increased 14-fold—from fewer than 8,000 to nearly 110,000 in 2013—and women in jail now account for approximately half of all women behind bars in the country.

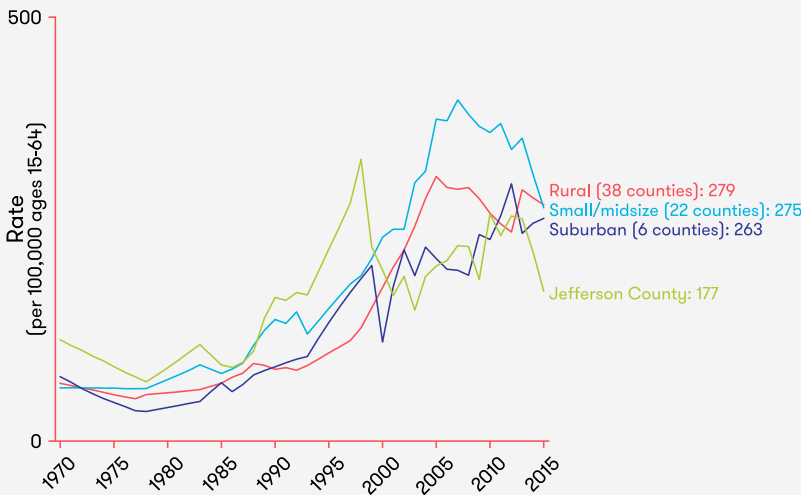
GEOGRAPHY

Statewide trends alone do not tell the whole story of incarceration: there is wide variation in the use of incarceration across the state. Today, the highest rates of prison admissions are in rural counties, and pretrial detention continues to increase in smaller counties even as it is on the decline in larger counties. It is critical to examine incarceration trends in every corner of the state, because although the largest counties may have the most people in jails—the highest rates of incarceration are in smaller cities and rural counties.



Comparing the jail populations for 2005 and 2015, counties shaded dark gray had fewer people in jail and those shaded dark red had more people in jail.

JAILS Pretrial population



Since 2000, the state's use of pretrial detention has taken different trajectories in different types of counties. The pretrial incarceration rate has increased 54% in the state's 38 rural counties, 15% in the state's 22 small/medium counties, and 125% in the state's six suburban counties. It has decreased 12% in the state's one urban county.

Vera's analysis of the urban-rural continuum changes the six categories defined by the National Center for Health Statistics Urban-Rural Classification Scheme for Counties to four. A county is labeled "urban" if it is one of the core counties of a metropolitan area with 1 million or more people and is labeled "suburban" if it is within the surrounding metropolitan area. Vera turns the remaining four categories into two by combining small and medium metropolitan areas ("small and midsize metro") and micropolitan and noncore areas ("rural").

JAIL ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 67 COUNTIES)

COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Macon	22,524	Jefferson	16,502
Cherokee	18,725	Madison	15,149
Marion	16,144	Tuscaloosa	11,560
Clay	13,862	Baldwin	11,261
Chambers	13,283	Morgan	8,000
Morgan	10,313	Lee	7,460
Lamar	9,965	Etowah	6,180
Pickens	9,853	Shelby	5,447
Chilton	9,775	Lauderdale	4,895
Marengo	9,771	Houston	4,658

PRISON ADMISSIONS (TOP 10 OF 67 COUNTIES)

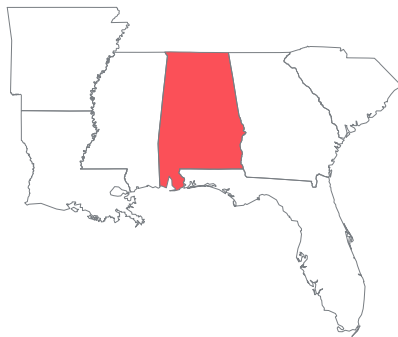
COUNTY	Rate (per 100K)	COUNTY	Annual count
Randolph	833	Jefferson	1,577
Covington	796	Mobile	1,332
Cherokee	625	Madison	690
Butler	620	Tuscaloosa	559
Escambia	588	Shelby	482
Cleburne	555	Montgomery	431
Franklin	553	Morgan	361
Marion	544	Houston	349
Houston	522	Baldwin	348
St. Clair	502	Calhoun	345

JAILS



Jail admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Arkansas	15,853	80%
2	Louisiana	9,174	-19%
3	Mississippi	8,335	13%
4	Georgia	7,747	-26%
5	South Carolina	6,559	-15%
6	Alabama	5,660	-39%
7	Florida	5,166	-37%



Jail pretrial population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Louisiana	456	-4%
2	Mississippi	350	9%
3	Georgia	313	-30%
4	Florida	284	-23%
5	Alabama	261	-19%
6	Arkansas	258	22%
7	South Carolina	252	-17%

Jail sentenced population

Rank	State	Rate (2015)	Rate change ('05-'15)
1	Louisiana	506	0.0%
2	Mississippi	290	0.1%
3	Georgia	242	0.3%
4	Arkansas	152	0.2%
5	Florida	139	-0.2%
6	Alabama	113	-0.3%
7	South Carolina	107	0.1%

PRISONS



Prison admissions

Rank	State	Rate (2016)	Rate change ('06-'16)
1	Arkansas	531	64%
2	Louisiana	518	-1%
3	Mississippi	385	-26%
4	Alabama	366	10%
5	Georgia	258	-27%
6	Florida	225	-26%
7	South Carolina	210	-35%

Prison population

Rank	State	Rate (2018)	Rate change ('08-'18)
1	Louisiana	1,062	-17%
2	Mississippi	1,013	-13%
3	Arkansas	928	18%
4	Alabama	848	-12%
5	Georgia	791	-2%
6	Florida	734	-13%
7	South Carolina	587	-26%

Data

This fact sheet uses data from four U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) data series and is supplemented with data obtained directly from state governments for the more recent years for which BJS data is not yet available, when available. The Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jails, and National Corrections Reporting Program provides data through 2016; the National Prisoner Statistics program provides data through 2017, and 2018 data is sourced from state agencies. Rates are per 100,000 residents aged 15 to 64. See *Data and Methods for Vera's State Fact Sheets*: www.vera.org/incarceration-trends-fact-sheets-data-and-methods.pdf for complete details. County-level data is available at trends.vera.org.

Acknowledgments

This series would not be possible without the excellent work of researchers at the Bureau of Justice Statistics—E. Ann Carson, Todd Minton, and Zhen Zeng—who maintain the Annual Survey of Jails, Census of Jails, National Corrections Reporting Program, and National Prisoner Statistics program. This report was designed by Paragini Amin and created by Christian Henrichson, Eital Schattner-Elmaleh, Jacob Kang-Brown, Oliver Hinds and James Wallace-Lee. This report was made possible by the support of Arnold Ventures. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Arnold Ventures.

Credits

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For more information

For more information, visit www.vera.org. For more information about this fact sheet, contact Jacob Kang-Brown, senior research associate, at jkangbrown@vera.org.